

The INQUIRER

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The voice of British and Irish Unitarians and Free Christians Issue 7713 January 10 2009

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The INQUIRER

THE UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN PAPER

Established 1842

The Inquirer is the oldest

Nonconformist religious newspaper

"To promote a free and inquiring religion through the worship of God and the celebration of life; the service of humanity and respect for all creation; and the upholding of the liberal Christian tradition."

*From the Object passed at the
General Assembly of the Unitarian and
Free Christian Churches 2001*

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Inquiring Words

I have a dream today

I have a dream today.

This nation shall repent

And live the meaning of its creed,

These truths self-evident:

That equal are all souls,

Endowed with certain rights;

Life, liberty and happiness

Are goals within my sight.

I have a dream today.

A trumpet sound shall blow,

Exalted shall each valley be

And hill and mountain low

Rough places are made plain,

The crooked places straight,

And from the mountain of despair

We'll hew a stone of hope.

I have a dream today.

When we let freedom ring

From snow-capped peaks to sun-baked clay,

When all God's children sing.

And this will be the day,

Sweet land of liberty,

When Black and White can join and pray

"Thank God, at last we're free."

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

Adapted by Richard Boeke to the tune 'Diademata'

A 'skirmish' with Unitarians

In 1960, though, my grandfather had not yet been tested; the disappointments would come later, and even they would come slowly, without the violence that might have changed him, for better or worse. In the back of his mind he had come to consider himself as something of a freethinker – bohemian, even. He wrote poetry on occasions, listened to jazz, counted a number of Jews he'd met in the furniture business as his closest friends. In his only skirmish into organized religion, he would enroll the family in the local Unitarian Universalist congregation; he liked the idea that Unitarians drew on the scriptures of all the great religions ("It's like you get five religions in one," he would say). Toot* would eventually dissuade him of his views on the church (For Christ's sake, Stanley, religion's not suppose to be like buying breakfast cereal!), but if my grandmother was more sceptical by nature, and disagreed with Gramps on some of his more outlandish notions, her own stubborn independence, her own insistence on thinking something through for herself, generally brought them into rough alignment. (Page 17)

(* Toot – We call my grandmother Tutu, 'Toot' for short; it means "grandparent" in Hawaiian, for she decided on the day I was born that she was too young to be called Granny.) Page 7)

Excerpt from 'Dreams from My Father', by US President-elect Barack Obama of Illinois.

— Contributed by Cen Llwyd

Nite Café welcomes all

Bolton serves alongside revellers

Bank St Chapel's location among bars and strip clubs offers an unusual opportunity for ministry.

Stephen Lingwood describes the Nite Café, where the sick, the drunk and the just plain talkative have come for support.

There are two sides to Bolton town centre. There is the day-time side – when the streets are full of people shopping and when many businesses and shops are in operation. And then there is the night-time Bolton. This is a very different beast. Like many other cities and towns all over the UK, Bolton town centre has a thriving night life – what is usually referred to by the town council as the “Night-Time Economy.”

At Bank Street Unitarian Chapel, we had spent more time thinking about the daytime Bolton than the night-time Bolton. We have a café on Thursday mornings that many people drop in to; as a member of Christians Together in Bolton Town Centre we participated in events such as carol singing at Christmas in the town, and, also along with CTBTC, we have supported the Town Centre Chaplaincy. But there was a whole side of Bolton we were ignoring: on Friday and Saturday nights the town centre streets are throbbing with people enjoying Bolton's nightlife. How were we relating to these people?

This was a question we began to ask ourselves as a group of diverse Christian churches in the town centre of Bolton. We felt that our faith called us to be alongside people, serving them, and we wanted to have a Christian presence in Bolton's nightlife. But what were the needs we could address as a group of churches?

In fact, the needs are great. As in any other town, Bolton's night-time economy has its share of problems. Many people overindulge in drinking, or take drugs, fights break out, people get separated from their friends, have arguments and get upset, and some people unknowingly have their drinks spiked with drugs. The police do what they can, and the town also employs two “Night-Time Ambassadors” that help to deal with many difficult situations, but there was still a great need for something to be done to help with these problems.

What was needed was a safe space, a place where people could sober up, have a cup of coffee, wait for a friend, or speak to someone who was prepared to listen. What was needed was a ‘Night Café.’ But where could such a café be situated? The answer was obvious. It had to be Bank Street Chapel. Our location is the closest to the main strip of bars through the town centre.

So after a long period of planning, the Night Café finally launched a pilot scheme last July. Based in Bank Street's hall, the café was staffed with volunteers from Bank Street and other churches and was open from 10pm to 3am every Saturday night.

Our experience over the summer showed us that this ministry can have a really positive effect on people's safety and wellbeing. We have had a large variety of people, in a vari-



Volunteers for the Night Café were drawn from Bank Street Chapel and other churches. Photo by Stephen Lingwood

ety of states! There have been people who needed someone to talk to after an argument with a partner; people who needed to sleep it off and sober up for an hour; people who had become separated from their friends and needed help to connect with them, and people who were quite happy to have a coffee and a chat about everything under the sun, putting the world to rights. We have also handed out more than 750 packets of “spikeys” – small plastic inserts for bottles to prevent them being spiked with drugs.

The project was deeply affected by one incident that happened during our second week of operation. The pub next door to the chapel was the scene of the fatal stabbing of a man, Paul Gilligan. We were all shocked and saddened by the news of this killing, but we did not know about the incident until the next morning. In the following weeks, many volunteers spent time at the front of the chapel, by the pub, where a make-shift shrine grew up to honour the young man who died. Many people needed to talk and the Night Café volunteers offered candles to light and proffered a listening ear.

This incident certainly demonstrated the worst that can happen in bars at night, but it would be wrong to see such a tragic event as typical for the thousands of people out in Bolton at weekends. All human life is here: young and old, coarse, swearing and infinitely polite and charming, laughter and tears, arguments and friendship, love and lust and hate. Our job is not to be judgmental, nor to evangelise; our job is simply to be there, offering what support we can. Our volunteers have found this ministry to be challenging, rewarding, sad, fun and fulfilling.

The pilot scheme is now over and we are in a period of reviewing what we can learn from this initial project. I am both proud and concerned to say that the majority of volunteers came from Bank Street. We have risen to the challenge of doing something outside our comfort zone and I am deeply honoured to be associated with a congregation that is prepared to do this kind of challenging ministry. At the same time we are a relatively small congregation, and there are not enough of us to support this ministry alone. We need more volunteers from churches or elsewhere who are prepared to join us in this

(Continued on next page)

Unitarian obituaries live online

By Alan Ruston

One of the most important features of journals such as *The Inquirer* is the published obituaries. Since *The Inquirer* started in July 1842, obituaries have been a continuing feature, and have proved to be amongst the first items readers turn to in any issue. Many thousands have been published over the years, and together with those in the *Monthly Repository* (1805-1832) and the *Christian Life* (1876-1929), obituaries constitute one of the major sources of information on Unitarian life and activity.

However, tracking down one particular obituary has always proved a problem – until now. Back in the 1960s, Mrs Betty Johnston, who was long associated with Manchester College Oxford, asked the then-Principal the Rev Harry Lismor Short what she could do to aid the study of Unitarian history. He suggested an index of obituaries and, over the course of about 20 years, she indexed the obituaries in all the main 19th and 20th century Unitarian journals held in Oxford. Although the leading figures are there, much more obscure people are also included – plus others who briefly appear in the paid-for notices. Some of the great and the good who were not Unitarian were covered. For example the obituary of the Duke of Wellington provides a fascinating insight into Unitarian opinions of the ‘Iron Duke’.

When Betty finished her task, the whole index consisted of about 28,000 references. Known as the Johnston Index, it's on cards and is kept up-to-date with each issue of *The Inquirer*. It has been a major finding tool for historians like me, and I would not have been able to create my index of the Obituaries



Harriet Martineau's obituary is among those online.

of Unitarian Ministers from 1800 without it. In 2003, grants were given to put the whole list on a database, so someone typed out the whole lot. The aim was to put it on a CD which could be purchased. But it later became clear that placing the index on a website was the best course. This proved more easily said than done.

However, this has now been achieved and the index can be seen on www.unitarianobituaries.org.uk. Any obituary which has appeared in Unitarian journals since 1798 can now be traced. Some references even show relationships to others in the same family, such as a widow or a son. Harris Manchester College Oxford, which owns the website, has all the original journals, and the Library staff – in return for a small donation – will look up the full obituary and send a copy to you.

When taken together with my index to the obituaries of Unitarian ministers to be found on www.unitarianhistory.org.uk, we now have the most comprehensive website source for finding out about individuals from our past of any denomination. So much is there, using the latest technology. It's not only Unitarians wanting to know about their past who will benefit, but also family historians. There is almost an embarrassment of riches. Even if you're not used to looking at websites, go to your local public library and look up those local figures in your congregation to see what was said about them. You might get some surprises!

Alan Ruston is a member of the Watford Unitarian Fellowship and is editor of 'Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society'.

Cooperation is the key to Café's success

(Continued from previous page)

exciting work. We are also in search of more funding to help us train volunteers and provided the basics we need for our work.

The story of the Night Café is an ongoing one. We are now reviewing the pilot so we can learn from the project and then re-launch it at a later time. We would like to see the project expand to include a more pro-active presence on the streets, possibly with "Street Angels" who can chat to people on the streets and let them know that the café is there if they need it. We know that there is a huge need for this ministry and we are committed to its continuation and expansion.

What can other Unitarian communities learn from our experience? First, to do something effectively it's necessary to work with others. Luckily for us, Bank Street Chapel has always been accepted as a full member of Christians Together in our locality. It is because of such good links between churches and other groups that this kind of ministry can take place. Secondly, social responsibility work has to start at your doorstep. At our doorstep on Bank Street were thousands of people using the bars on Saturday nights, so we have responded to this population. We can't solve all the world's problems, but we can respond to what is right in front of us. That's where we must start.

This article was written with supporting information provid-



A memorial sprung up for Paul Gilligan who was stabbed to death in the pub next door to Bank Street Chapel. Photo by Mike Aspinall

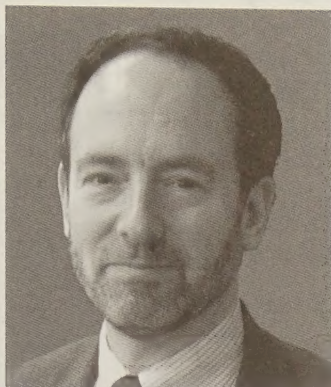
ed by Adrienne Tonge, a leading volunteer for the Night Café and member of Bank Street Chapel, and Mike Aspinall, leading volunteer and United Reformed Church ministry student.

Stephen Lingwood is minister at Bank Street Unitarian Chapel, Bolton.

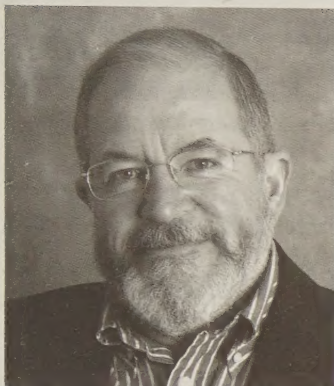
Results: EC members elected



Joan Cook



Andy Pakula



Jim Corrigan



Ann Peart



Elisabeth (Lis) Dyson-Jones



Peter Soulsby



Dot Hewerdine



David Usher

By Anne Hock

Result of ballot for election to the Executive Committee of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches:

1726 valid ballots were received. Votes were counted using the Single Transferable Vote method.

The following candidates were elected:

Joan Cook, Jim Corrigan, Elisabeth (Lis) Dyson-Jones, Dot Hewerdine, Andrew Pakula, Ann Peart, Peter Soulsby, David Usher.

The dispatch of ballot papers is calculated as follows: Sent via Congregations for distribution: 3768

Sent direct to Full Members: 143

Sent on request to Associate Members: 22

TOTAL 3933

The details for appropriate person and address for each Congregation, and the number of members as at September 2007 was provided to Popularis, and each Congregation was sent the appropriate number of ballot papers, election statements and reply paid envelopes for distribution.

A list of Full Members giving individual names and addresses was supplied to Popularis, and each was sent a ballot paper, election statements and a reply paid envelope.

A list of Associate Members giving individual names and addresses was supplied to Popularis, and each was sent a letter informing them that they could apply to Popularis for a ballot pack if they did not receive one through their Congregation. Twenty-two members made an application. The data was checked to ensure that there were no duplicates.

Full and Associate members sent a ballot paper by Popularis were required to sign a statement that they had voted only once and to return the statement with the ballot paper. All ballot papers returned by Full and Associate Members were returned with a signed statement.

I am satisfied that the arrangements made with respect to the production, storage, distribution, return and other handling of the voting papers used in the ballot, and the arrangements for the counting of the votes, included all such security arrangements as were reasonably practicable for the purpose of minimising the risk that any unfairness or malpractice might occur.

Anne Hock was the Independent Scrutineer of the election, which was conducted by Popularis Ltd, Leicester.

Community involvement

Jim Corrigan visits Derbyshire and discovers how the Old Chapel at Great Hucklow functions as a centre for the local community while retaining its special place in Unitarian hearts.

It was a clear, cold night in the High Peak of Derbyshire, with a 250-strong crowd strung out along a village road on either side of a lighted tea tent. From just inside the tent, a preacher is leading the crowd in prayers and singing.

But this is no revivalist rally: the preacher is none other than the Unitarian minister of The Old Chapel, Great Hucklow, the Rev David Shaw, and he's conducting an open-air service of thanksgiving for light – in this case the village Christmas lights, which have just been ceremonially switched on.

As the short Saturday evening service ended, villagers clustered together chatting and laughing, or walked along the village roads admiring the Christmas lights on trees, posts and homesteads. I joined in the fun, having come up to Great Hucklow for the weekend to see how this chapel is getting on (as part of this series for *The Inquirer*).

The event was a startling illustration of the role of the Old Chapel and its minister in the village, one of the success stories of our Unitarian denomination. Yet this achievement was not inevitable, and it's fascinating to learn how it's come about.

There is now only one place of worship in Great Hucklow and the Rev David Shaw is busy. David presides at other similar ceremonies; for example, during 'Wakes Week' (a traditional celebration of wells and water in August) he blesses the 'well-dressings' at two places in the village, after a brass band leads the way between them. A special village service is held in the Chapel to mark the end of Wakes Week.

The Chapel has been part of a recent community revival in which traditional customs have been recreated. The driving



The Rev David Shaw leads an open-air evening service in Great Hucklow, after the Christmas lights are turned on. Photo by Jim Corrigan

force here has been the village voluntary organisation, Community Spirit, with which the Chapel works closely.

It's worth noting that the Unitarian Conference Centre, the Nightingale Centre, which lies close to the Old Chapel in Great Hucklow, also plays its role. Both Chapel and Centre open their premises to community events throughout the year – and thus help sustain village life.

The morning after the lights ceremony, I travelled over a high ridge to Great Hucklow from the nearby village of Grindlifford, where I stayed the night at the home of David and Liz Shaw. David had left earlier for his Sunday morning service, and Liz was driving me to the service and speaking about the work of the Chapel.

It was a one of those perfect High Peak days: clear and sharp to the farthest horizon, with a bright frost covering the ground and snow drifts along the roadsides. This winter drive seemed a fitting prelude to the service of the day, a 'Gift Service' where Christmas gifts are donated by chapel members for children being cared for by the Sheffield Probation Service. At the Chapel, presents were already being brought in, and it soon became apparent as they piled up under the tree that the wider village community was contributing too.

This was a regular service in early December attended purely by the 'local' community – there were no 'outside' Unitarians staying at the Nightingale Centre (who normally come to Old Chapel services). Even so, 19 people were at the service, which had a traditional Unitarian feel, with a candle of joy for Advent and the Lord's Prayer recited by all. The approach of mid-winter was also evoked – and David's reflections on 'giving' maintained a fine balance between humour and pathos.

A regular Chapel attender, Jack Binks, accepted the gifts on behalf of the Sheffield Probation Service (for which he used to work). He spoke to the congregation of the difficulties and dangers inherent in probation and social work.

After the service, I was able to hear about the Chapel and its wider role. As part of its outward-looking policy, the Chapel has recently completed major building work: new toilets, new paths and disabled access to the building have been provided.

Growing congregations

This is the last in a series on successful Unitarian communities around the country. The focus has been on several congregations where all kinds of growth is taking place – not just the numerical kind. These communities are simply examples. Their ideas are offered as 'best practices' from which other groups may draw inspiration.

(Continued on page 8)

eeeps Hucklow growing



Phyllis Walton

An atmosphere that attracts

Phyllis Walton is chair of the Old Chapel and has lived in Great Hucklow for more than 30 years. Christened a Unitarian in Lancashire, she attended Nightingale Centre activities in her youth. Phyllis moved to the village when her first husband got a job as gardener and handyman at the Nightingale Centre, where Phyllis also worked (as 'a general dogsbody').

‘We are a small, thriving congregation here, and we have many more people supporting us – in lots of different ways. We reach out to the community – the Chapel is used by all the groups in the village, including the school.

People say they like coming here because of the atmosphere – it's a very friendly place. I love this Chapel, I wouldn't think of going anywhere else. I enjoy the freedom we have in worship, the variety in our different services. David is doing a marvellous job as minister, we are lucky to have him. He's a very good leader and he's warm and caring – he visits so many people, not just in the village, but more widely too.’

A lifetime's association

Jack Binks was born in Great Hucklow and has lived in the village all his life. Although christened in the Church of England, he attended Sunday School at the Old Chapel in the 1940s. Jack worked in the Probation Service in Sheffield for 25 years.

‘I attend services here about once a month, and I cut the grass regularly – a job my brother used to do. My parents were married here, as were my two sisters, so we have always been part of this Chapel.

It's closely linked to the Unitarian Conference Centre, and village kids were always welcome at the Chapel and the Centre. The congregation has never been large, but it keeps on going and I'm glad to be part of it.’

Kath Binks was in the Church of England, but she attends services at the Old Chapel.

‘I come to services here with my husband quite regularly, and I would say I now regard myself as a Unitarian. The Old Chapel is lovely, so friendly. It doesn't have the pomp and ceremony of the Church of England.’



Kath and Jack Binks



Marie Taylor

Moved by 'Christian deeds'

Marie Taylor has become the newest member of the congregation at the age of 84. She lives in the nearby village of Eyam (the historical 'plague village') where she moved two years ago to be near her son and grandchildren. She was born in Sheffield and had lived there all her life.

‘I spent most of my life an Anglican and I was head teacher of a Church of England primary school. But there were some experiences with the Anglicans that hurt me; and I don't like fundamentalist influences.

‘I enjoy coming to the Old Chapel, although I sometimes miss the comforting words of the (Anglican) Prayer Book. But Unitarian services are familiar to me, because my father attended Upper Chapel in Sheffield, and used to take me with him. My brother was killed in the war and his name is on the War Memorial at Upper Chapel.

‘David Shaw has been a wonderful minister – he's been to see me regularly, and recently he took me to see my brother's war grave in Sheffield. What's more Christian than that?’

Photos by Jim Corrigan

Outreach brings community closer

(Continued from page 6)

At the same time the congregation also raised £2,000 for the reopening of two wells in Burkina Faso (through the charity WaterAid).

The Chapel's treasurer, Margaret Wain, told me the Chapel had raised £64,000 to meet the bill for the building work. How had it managed this? Well, she said, the Chapel benefits from having 'a great many Unitarian friends' throughout Britain – or, as another member put it, it has a 'special place in Unitarian hearts'. Grants, together with local and national fundraising, had done the trick. The next phase of the project is just beginning, to allow better access within the Chapel building (including for wheelchairs).

Margaret's husband, Roy Wain, has been overseeing building work as chair of the Chapel Trustees, a post he has held since the start of 2005. Roy himself was Lay Leader at the Old Chapel, from 2000 to the end of 2004, just before David took over. In fact, David had been the chair of Trustees beforehand, and the two men literally swapped roles. Did this role reversal cause problems?

Not at all, I was assured. Although spiritual leaders sometimes absent themselves after they hand over the reins, David says he was delighted when Roy agreed to continue attending and also oversee the building work – so the chair of Trustees seemed the obvious vacancy for Roy to fill!

The Old Chapel had not had a permanent worship leader for 10 years before Roy began, and the congregation had become very small. David emphasises that it was under Roy's leadership that the Chapel's fortunes were turned round, and he is delighted to be continuing the work begun by Roy.

Old Chapel membership now stands at 22, although only five of these live in Great Hucklow village. But David is quick to point out that, in village terms, these figures reveal only part of reality. The minister has a further list of 80 people living in the village and surrounding area – some of whom attend services quite regularly, some occasionally and others who support the Chapel in a variety of ways (from baking cakes to helping at special events, or through donations.)

The Chapel now holds coffee mornings every Saturday from May to September, and for three nights in the run-up to Christmas it plays host to older people coming to see the Christmas lights in the village and in nearby Castleton (they are brought by community transport bus.)

David also leads worship occasionally at the local primary school in Great Hucklow, and the school holds its local Christmas performance at the Old Chapel to packed audiences (with the minister offering Christmas thoughts and leading prayers). The local embroidery group, the Women's Institute, the Parish Council and Community Spirit all use the Chapel for their meetings.

And then there is a big pastoral need. David does a lot of visiting of those ill or in need – way beyond the Chapel's members, and often much farther afield than Great Hucklow. Many of those he sees he describes as 'theologically-wounded', people hurt by harsh attitudes by other churches. He sees this as part of his wider mission.

Great Hucklow itself is a small village with some 50 home-steads (and about 100 inhabitants). David distributes the Chapel newsletter to most village doors – and tells me many attend Chapel Services and other events during the year. The news-



Jack Binks and David Shaw are happy to see the Christmas gifts pile up under the tree in the Chapel. Photo by Jim Corrigan

letter is distributed more widely too, as are Chapel leaflets and cards for the ill. All Chapel activities are advertised in the local free press.

The Old Chapel and Great Hucklow have a unique place in our wider Unitarian community – in Britain and beyond (requests for rites of passage ceremonies sometimes come from abroad). During the past year, 36 services were attended by 'outside' Unitarians staying at the Nightingale Centre. David says these visitors are most welcome, 'a part of our much wider community'.

The minister describes his congregation as very tolerant, with views ranging from liberal Christian to Quaker/Buddhist and humanist. But he emphasises it has a distinctive style – not least because of a 'village way of doing things' where agreement is often reached through a quiet nod rather than formal decisions.

David himself is half-time minister, taking 23 services a year at Great Hucklow, and he now also takes services for Unitarians at Chesterfield. He has a long association with Great Hucklow, after attending events in the village as a young Unitarian from his home in Altrincham (south of Manchester.) He remained active in our denomination throughout his career as a teacher and later head teacher. He and Liz were married at the Chapel 20 years ago, and they began living locally eight years ago when Liz took up the post of manager of the Nightingale Centre.

They became increasingly active in the congregation, and when Roy announced he wanted to retire as Lay Leader, the congregation turned to David (who had recently retired from teaching). David says he was 'very touched' to be asked – he took over initially as lay-person-in charge and (after completing training) as Minister.

Both David and Liz Shaw have since become more deeply involved. Liz now commutes to Unitarian College Manchester where she works as College Administrator, but remains very active in the Great Hucklow congregation. She herself has recently begun to lead services as a lay worship leader. These two Unitarians clearly delight in being part of this small – but vibrant – community.

Jim Corrigan is a member of the Golders Green Congregation. This is the last in his series on 'Growing Congregations'.

Lindsey's legacy celebrated in London

By Howard Hague

November marked 200 years since the death in 1808 of the Rev Theophilus Lindsey, the founder of the original chapel in Essex Street, from which the present day Essex Church takes its name. The congregation moved from that site near the Strand in central London to its present location in Notting Hill Gate in 1887, leaving Essex Street to become in due course the national headquarters of our Unitarian denomination, as it still is today.

On Saturday, 15 November some 30 people from the London district and beyond gathered at the City Road entrance to the Bunhill Fields cemetery to take part in a 'pilgrimage' to Lindsey's grave, led by Alan Ruston, one of our leading historians. Alan pointed out various graves of interest to dissenters, including Richard Price (minister for many years at our Newington Green chapel and pioneer in actuarial science), Daniel Williams (founder of the Dr Williams' Library, now in Gordon Square), Isaac Watts the hymn writer, John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe and William Blake. The walk finished at Lindsey's tomb, which lies in a rather prominent position in the northwestern corner of the cemetery.

Here, Alan told us something of Lindsey's remarkable story: how he resigned as a Church of England vicar in 1773 for reasons of conscience, finding he could no longer subscribe to its creeds, moved to London and founded the first avowedly Unitarian congregation in the country in 1774. Alan, standing next to Lindsey's tomb, commented that "If there is a sacred place for Unitarians, this is it". It is worth noting that Essex Street Chapel's third minister, the Rev Dr Thomas Belsham, is also buried in the same tomb as Lindsey and his wife Hannah. Lindsey, Belsham and Joseph Priestley are sometimes known



The Rev Sarah Tinker leads a short ceremony to honour the life and work of the Rev Theophilus Lindsey at his tomb in Bunhill Fields Burial Ground, London, part of commemorations for the bicentenary of his death. Photo by Jeff Teagle.

as 'the three apostles' of modern Unitarianism. The Lindsey tomb is in a good state of preservation, with all the lettering clearly visible. If you find yourself in the City Road, London EC1 and haven't been to Bunhill Fields before, I can recommend a visit. It is an oasis of calm in a busy area. The nearest tubes are Old Street and Moorgate.

On Sunday, 16 November, the celebrations continued at Essex church itself. The morning service, led jointly by the Rev Sarah Tinker and the Rev Jeff Gould (visiting from the Bury church in Lancashire) was on the theme of Unitarian Christianity. The readings included an excerpt from one of Lindsey's letters about the opening of Essex Street Chapel on 17 April 1774, written the day after ("a larger and much more respectable audience than I could have expected, who behaved with great decency ..."). After a simple lunch of soup, bread and cheese, provided by the congregation, the afternoon was devoted to the Lance Garrard Memorial Lecture, arranged by the Unitarian Christian Association, and given by Professor Grayson Ditchfield of the University of Kent. His lecture was entitled 'From Prayer Book to Personal Piety: The Contribution of Theophilus Lindsey to the Emergence of a Unitarian Identity', and proved to be both illuminating and enjoyable. These days we tend to forget just how radical Lindsey's views and writings were seen to be at the time. In claiming that the trinity was unscriptural, that God alone and not Jesus should be worshipped and in rejecting original sin, he was seen to be undermining the basis of Christianity, and came in for fierce criticism. The irony is that Lindsey himself was something of a reluctant dissenter, for he had hoped to reform the church from within, rather than help to found a new religious movement. Another point made by Professor Ditchfield was the vital role played by Lindsey's wife Hannah, who gave him total support in both practical and religious matters, not least when his health started to decline. Sadly no portrait of her seems to exist.

Earlier this year some members of the Essex Church congregation put together a Lindsey worship pack at the invitation of the GA's Worship Panel, to help the wider denomination mark the bicentenary. Copies of the pack are still available. At the time I did wonder how relevant we would still find him to be. I no longer have any doubts about this. Three cheers for Theophilus!

Howard Hague is a member of Essex Church, Kensington.



Jeff Gould (left) of the Unitarian Christian Association and Sarah Tinker of Kensington Unitarians with the Lindsey lecturer, Grayson Ditchfield. Photo by Jim Corrigan

Money is not the key to congregational growth

In the Christmas edition of the *Inquirer*, John Janssen asks for more clarification about the situation at Kingswood.

I was absolutely delighted with Jim Corrigan's article about Kingswood, (*Inquirer*, 29 November) to which Mr Janssen refers. Jim was quite clear in the article that Kingswood's healthier financial position seemed, to him, to be only *part* of the reason for growth. I would agree with this assessment. After all, having money in the bank account won't bring a single new person along to worship!

When Kingswood was faced with the retirement of its long-serving and much-loved minister, the Rev Keith Hill, a joint ministry was forged with Warwick Unitarians. To fund this, Kingswood would have had to use some capital each year to meet their share of the stipend payments. This would not have been an ideal situation and could not have continued indefinitely. Thankfully, the trustees were able to realise certain assets which means they are now able to give a generous amount each year to the congregation towards the costs of the ministry.

Kingswood might be in a better financial position these days, but it is worth restating that this was not the case when the new ministry was formulated.

It was step of faith...

I would also point out that the new organ and many of the other projects that the chapel has embarked upon have been funded by monies *raised by the congregation*. Of course, because we have grown numerically, it means that live giving has increased too.

Having money clearly helps, but money by itself will not grow a congregation.

One cannot underestimate the importance of enthusiasm, vision and a genuine desire to grow. Growth can be uncomfortable, and it takes a lot of courage to move into the future knowing that things may change radically. The congregation at Kingswood rose admirably to the challenge.

Mr Janssen asks again what the secret of Kingswood's success is. There are several clues in Jim's article, but maybe Mr Janssen would like to come and visit us? He would be very welcome to do so.

For my part, I can only say that I am blessed to minister to two amazing congregations, both of which are growing and looking towards the future, who amaze me by their love and generosity and support, and who teach me far more than I could ever teach them about how to live in a lovingly religious way.

We can all play a part in growing our movement (and it won't cost you a penny!). Unitarianism is powerful stuff. It is life-changing and life-affirming. All we need to do is share it!

The Rev Ant Howe

Minister – Kingswood Meeting House

Are EC members leaders or servants?

The recent title on the *Inquirer* regarding the election of the Executive Committee has been something I have dwelt on in my thinking for days.

For myself it has raised a theological question as to how do people in Unitarian circles view leadership today? What model of leadership are we electing? Are we led or directed by the Executive Committee or the General Assembly? And, by voting, do we give it authority over our local congregations or does it serve us and our congregations (large and small) equally?

I have been a Free Church man most of my life so for me I come to this title heavily influenced by biblical exegesis. I come from an understanding that hierarchical governing is why free churches were formed in protest. Having said that, I do recognise the need for a body to serve the needs of its membership. But for me, at this moment in time and with my understanding, the key word is not leader so much, but servant.

Those of us from Christian perspectives will identify with Jesus washing the feet of his disciples as a demonstration of the humility needed to lead others. But others may not make such a direct link in their understanding. Others may look at Gandhi and his leadership style, for example. As a creedless religion when it comes to election of 'leadership', how we view this is possibly very different to what maybe termed leaders in other religions – such as Bishops and so on. In Unitarian circles what might be explicit in other religions can also be implicit in ours.

As I read, the word 'leader', my mind ruled it out and replaced the word servant, but that is just me, and I am not advocating others must view it this way. But I want to ask: what do we see behind a call to elect leaders of our denomination? I want us to question what is behind the use of a word. If it is not what I see, then where do we find our understanding?

Can we collectively find role models for leadership elsewhere, in political society perhaps or industry? I would hope this is not the case, for with some exceptions most view things very differently from the roots of Unitarianism. Secular society today has few role models I would wish to adopt when I look for leaders of a faith community, but what do we think? As Unitarians can we really take any of these as a role model for leaders?

As we elected people to the executive committee of the General Assembly I dwelt on the use of the word leader. I hope those who are elected will wash our feet and serve the congregations who elect them, finding their role model somewhere near the one I hold dear to me.

Andie Camper.

Servant of Westgate Chapel, Lewes

Worthing Unitarians are still active

Worthing Unitarians: 45 and not out, in spite of what the new directory suggests!

In 1964 Olive Poole, previously a member of Brighton Unitarian Church, helped found the Worthing Unitarian Fellowship. Over the years they held charity status in their own right and the numbers increased but the number of Unitarians retiring to the south has decreased. There was a particularly traumatic time a few years ago, when seven deaths occurred in five months. However, Olive had secured the Fellowship with a generous legacy, which enabled it to share my ministry with Brighton and we worked together to change the format of our meetings to reach out from beyond the traditional Sunday service.

In the past few years, as well as holding regular services, we have hosted regular talks and discussions which can draw up to 25 visitors and have initiated

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League celebrates and looks to future

By Penny Johnson

Women's League President

This year the Unitarian Women's League has been celebrating its hundredth anniversary. This cannot have escaped the notice of *Inquirer* readers up and down the country. In our celebrations we have been concerned about our image. Image is important, and it must reflect what is true about us. We are women who are proud of our history, but it is the present and future which concern us now. "The past is a springboard, not a sofa", to quote a Unitarian wayside pulpit. More to the point, we are concerned that our Women's League Branches and Districts are fresh and vibrant, open to new thinking as well as maintaining the best of past tradition. Our main celebration was at Upper Chapel, Sheffield on 5 July when over 100 members gathered for lunch and a re-enactment of our history over the 100 years of our existence.

We are now thinking together of new ways to attract members. Listening attentively to those who might join us is very important: what would they wish to find in our Leagues? Obviously, friendship and concern for each other, and an outreach to the wider world community by supporting the Women's League projects, such as Chaste, the India Fund, Sightsavers International, and, next year, Meningitis. We have collected over £150,000 in the last 30 years, and have, thereby, helped to make a difference in the world. What else? I trust they would find an openness to their concerns, a positive approach to all that we do, and never hear at any point, "We have always done it this way."

A more recent wayside pulpit announces: "Only that which changes remains true." Brilliant! Since few of us welcome change, such words challenge us. Some changes just happen and carry us along with them, like driftwood, but we initiate others, and take responsibility for them. The Women's League members realise that unless we are prepared to embrace new ideas, new ways, we shall inevitably peter out, and in this, our 100th year, the theme is appropriately "Transformation."

We are already considering the possibility of changing our name from "The British League of Unitarian and other Liberal Christian Women." If so, then into what is not entirely clear. If we remain a group of women only, (a single-sex organisation), then perhaps "The Unitarian Women's League". But we already have men who are members, and many other men who join us on occasions. Are we going to make this more official, and will doing so be reflected in our name? This is not the most

important change, except that some of us feel that a long and rather out-dated title may be off-putting to the would-be new member. It is what we actually do, which is most important.

We are also tentatively exploring possibilities of forging stronger links with the Unitarian Women's Group. The Women's Group was formed at the General Assembly Meetings in 1979 to address women's needs and women's issues. Last year both organisations were raising money for "Chaste" which deals with human trafficking. To what extent can we offer further support to the mutual advantage of us both?

As President of the Women's League, I have visited many Districts and Branches up and down the country. The most northerly was Perth in Scotland where four Branches, (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee) came together to mark the Centenary of the National Women's League, and also 50 years of the Women's League in Scotland. The most southerly was Horsham in West Sussex. My first Welsh visit was to Abertawe in South Wales. In my capacity as the Women's League president, I have conducted many services for congregations without a Women's League, and have spoken enthusiastically about our project for the year, "Sightsavers International". This organisation helps to restore the sight of millions and millions of people in deprived parts of the world each year. I ask that all our congregations consider "Sightsavers International" as a worthy cause for donations, and, if they are kind enough to respond positively, to make cheques payable to "The Women's League Project Account" and send to the Treasurer, Mrs Eunice Smith, 14 Lynnwood Drive, Rochdale, Lancs, OL11, 5YX before the General Assembly Meetings in April, when Russell Richards from "Sightsavers" will be present to receive (hopefully) a large cheque, and when I shall hand over the baton to Mary Wightman from Dundee.

I am looking forward to making a visit to Northern Ireland in January to take greetings to the Women's League in Ireland from our own Unitarian Women's League. (This is a separate organisation from our own.) Wherever I have gone, I have been heartened by a positive approach, the commitment and dedication of many, many women (and men). Members love their League and are keen to keep it lively. We are continuing to talk, change and move, so watch this space!"

This is a quarterly column on the activities of the Women's League. In addition to serving as president of the league, the Rev Penny Johnson is a retired Unitarian minister.

Letter

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a local interfaith information resource group, 'Faith in Worthing'. When it was realised that it was no longer feasible for Worthing to fulfil the financial and administration demands of the Charity Commission, it was agreed that the Charity status would be relinquished and funds transferred to Brighton for administration, in accordance with the dissolution clause. This followed from discussion with Brighton and they were, and are, fully

appreciative of their responsibilities, both moral and financial, to sustain a Unitarian presence in Worthing. Although I am retiring from Brighton at the end of this year, I will continue to provide pastoral oversight to Worthing, remain active in 'Faith in Worthing' and indeed, in 2009, we plan an increase in the number of meetings hosted by the Unitarians at the Friends Meeting House in West Worthing. Surprisingly, in spite of all this work

and careful commitment, Essex Hall removed all trace of the Unitarians in Worthing from the most recent directory. We might not be growing in membership, *but* we have a higher and more positive profile in the wider community of Worthing than ever before. Sadly, it would seem that if you don't conform to a prescribed format you simply do not exist.
The Rev Jane Barton
Brighton

News in brief



(l-r) Prof Edward Gregson, Prof Sir Tim Berners-Lee, Prof Sir Bernard Lovell and Mr Edwin Davies, who received honorary doctorates from The University of Manchester in December.

Sir Tim Berners-Lee honoured by the University of Manchester

Web inventor and Unitarian, Professor Sir Tim Berners-Lee received an honorary 'Doctor of Science honoris causa'. Oxford graduate Professor Berners-Lee is credited with inventing the World Wide Web in 1989 while at CERN, the European Particle Physics Laboratory.

He holds the position of the Director of the World Wide Web Consortium, as well as holding Chairs at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and The University of Southampton.

In 2004 he was knighted by HM Queen Elizabeth and in 2007 he was awarded the Order of Merit.

Both of Sir Tim's parents worked on the Manchester Mark 1 – the offspring of the famous Baby computer, which was first demonstrated at The University of Manchester in June 1948. Photo courtesy of the University of Manchester.

Stand Sunday School celebrates 200 years



On Sunday 2 November, a special service was held to celebrate this momentous occasion. There were many guests including the Deputy Mayor and Mayoress of Bury. Messages were received from former members of the Sunday School, now spread across the world. After the service the Deputy Mayor cut a celebration cake and expressed his congratulations to

the congregation. At the service, an appeal was launched to raise £200 for a local children's hospice. That target has already been passed.

Deputy Mayor and Mayoress of Bury, Mrs Pat Booth Chapel President, the Rev Beryl Allerton and Laura and Emma Shatliff, members of the Sunday school.

Chris Wilson to be Mayor's Chaplain

The Rev Chris Wilson, associate minister at Old Meeting Unitarian Church, Great Yarmouth is to be appointed as the (Unitarian and Free Christian) Mayor's Chaplain to the incoming Mayor of Cambridge, Councillor Russ McPherson.

The appointment will last for one year, and will be effective from Thursday, 21 May. The responsibilities include attendance at Council Meetings for opening prayers, attendance at church services, civic receptions, and accompanying the Mayor at other official functions.

Chris works with Russ at Cambridge Regional College, where they continue with the work of the multi-faith chaplaincy, and out of which this opportunity has arisen.



(l-r, front) Maureen Brown, the Mayoress Mrs Philippa Hill, the Mayor Councillor John Hill, Sheilah Stott, Rona Swindlehurst. (back) Roger Britnell (guest organist), Eric Millest (musical director) and Barry Brown, concerts organiser.

Second 'Musical Extravaganza' a success

The Mayor and Mayoress of Ribble Valley, Councillor John Hill and Mrs Phillipa Hill were guests of honour at the second concert in this year's *Musical Extravaganza* series at the Unitarian Church in Padiham given by the Blackburn Salvation Army Brass Band with guest organist Roger Britnell.

A capacity and most appreciative audience was entertained with an evening of musical brilliance. A varied programme included marches, songs from the shows and vocal, cornet and organ solos.

Next concert on 17 January

The third concert in the fifth series of 'Musical Extravaganza' will take place on 17 January, and will feature the famous Houghton Weavers, a much-travelled group.

There are some tickets left at £7. Please contact Barry Brown on 01282 773336 or email: barrybrown@googlemail.com